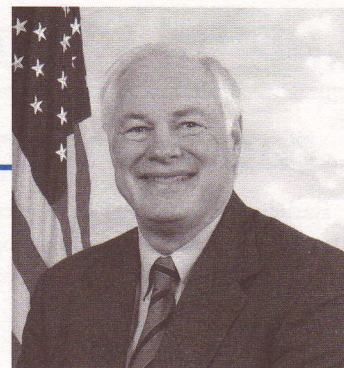


Congressman Jim Leach

Representing the Second District of Iowa



Summer 2005

This newsletter is dedicated to three subjects -- public broadcasting, financial scams and war profiteering. Many of you have contacted my office about Social Security, so first, a few words of where we stand on this issue.

The President correctly noted that in the out years there is a shortfall in Social Security receipts versus payment obligations. But instead of proposing a comprehensive approach to dealing with future solvency problems, the Administration suggested that the system's methodology be changed. Personal accounts, the President urges, should be substituted for the current fixed-benefit system.

There are advantages and disadvantages to private accounts. Looking backward, such an approach, if adopted when Social Security was initiated in the 1930s, might have provided retirees more generous monthly income today. Looking forward, however, it is hard to be confident that investment in the stock market in this century will exceed inflation rates by five percent a year, as it averaged during the last one.

In addition, the cost of transitioning out of the current system to a new one is extraordinary and little public support has developed for the effort. Accordingly, my sense is that the President's approach is unlikely to be brought to the floor of either the House or Senate. Private-account plans such as a 401(k) may be enhanced by Congress, but only to serve as complements rather than as a replacement for the Social Security system.

Sincerely,



To share your views or send a comment, click EMAIL JIM on my website: www.house.gov/leach

Leach Amendment Protects Public Broadcasting

Earlier this summer, an appropriations subcommittee of the House proposed to slash the 2006 budget of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Such a reduction would have forced a number of radio and TV stations to go out of business and denied audiences all over the country the kind of uplifting cultural programming and informative public affairs shows that have long been the hallmark of public radio and television.

With this in mind, along with two Democratic colleagues, I offered an amendment to bring the CPB budget back to prior years' levels. Though controversial, it prevailed and the issue will now be taken up by the Senate.

CPB was created by Congress in 1967 as a private, not-for-profit corporation to provide high-quality, non-commercial programming to the American public.

American families have turned to public broadcasting as an alternative to commercial programming, which increasingly seems to

emphasize the sensational and mirror the partisan tone of American politics.

Unlike the multinational media conglomerates that dominate the airwaves and cable, the 348 PBS stations are locally owned and operated and accountable to the communities they serve.

Passing this amendment was difficult, but it was critical because a public broadcasting budget cut would have hurt our children and the least fortunate in our community the most. PBS produces the most popular videos used by American teachers in their classrooms. For so many parents, PBS programs are the best educational tools that they have.

In recent weeks, public broadcasting has come under fire in Washington because of the concern of some that its programs have been critical of Administration policies and allegedly lack balance.

But the Congress never intended the system to be a propagandistic megaphone for the government or a party. It is, after all,

"public" broadcasting; not "government" broadcasting.

The ideas presented on the air are expected to be honest and of the highest quality, reflecting a variety of views. All governments and all government officials, whether they be of the left, right or center, should expect to have their views criticized.

It is simply better for our society to have a skeptical and inquisitive public broadcasting system than one that slavishly follows a particular line, especially if that line happens to reflect any government's view.

Public broadcasting is a national asset. It has raised the civility level of public discourse and increased appreciation for the arts. CPB programming has not only added to the store of citizen knowledge, it has been presented in such a way that the values that underpin public policy have themselves been enhanced.

What parents and children get from free, over-the-air public television and public radio is a bargain. Congress should not pull the plug.



Please indicate which flag you would like flown:

___ 3 x 5 Cotton (\$16.50)

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Our flag is a symbol of American strength and pride. You may purchase flags that have been flown over the Capitol building through my office at any time during the year. Each flag comes with a certificate commemorating the occasion.

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Jim testifies June 15 before a committee of Congress.

New Truman Commission required for War on Terror

In February 1941, concerned about possible waste and favoritism, then-Senator Harry Truman introduced legislation to create a congressional committee to investigate how defense contracts were awarded and managed. The Truman Committee exposed deficiencies in the procurement process and was credited with frustrating war profiteering by calling for greater small business access to government procurement, thus saving taxpayers large sums of money -- and doing so without regard to partisan considerations.

Because the United States is engaged today in military and reconstruction activities in Iraq and Afghanistan and in efforts to prevent terrorist attacks at home, the integrity of the procurement process is of paramount importance. Whatever the merits of government policy, the public has the right to expect that the government's resources are carefully allocated and the money is honestly spent.

Accordingly, legislation I have introduced calls for the creation of a select committee to study, among other things, the bidding, contracting, and auditing standards in the issuance of government contracts; and the accountability of contractors and government officials involved in procurement.

Significantly, the Truman Committee was established within a Congress controlled by the same party as the Executive. Just as it was then, oversight should not be considered partisan; it should be viewed solely in the context of protecting and preserving public resources and bolstering people's confidence in their government and public officials.

“ Oversight should not be considered partisan. ”

Beware: ‘Nigerian Scams’ are too good to be true

Online, face-to-face financial schemes prey upon our community

Thousands of Iowans -- executives, workers, retirees, students -- receive unsolicited letters or emails every year telling them how they can share in a huge financial gain related to the transfer of a foreigner's bank assets. The lure of lottery-like windfalls is great.

The question is whether schemes of this nature are too good to be true. The answer is yes: they are scams designed to bilk citizens of their savings.

Known as Nigerian scams, after the country in which they most often originate, or as 4-1-9 Fraud, after the relevant section of the Nigerian criminal code, these schemes take many forms. But they all start with the proposition that a large sum of money is trapped in a foreign bank account. The victim is asked to participate in a plot to move that money to a U.S. or European bank in return for a large share of the transaction. Before the transfer can be made, however, he needs to put up cash for transfer taxes and fees that run into thousands of dollars.

Sometimes the reasons the funds are blocked relate to a foreign official or a relative having a difficult time moving money that may be tainted.

Perpetrators of that kind of scam are usually after the money paid in by the unsuspecting victim, although in some cases they might steal credit card and bank account numbers and commit identity theft.

Advanced Fee Fraud schemes, as they are technically called, are often creative and innovative.

Solicitors sometimes prey upon a donor's charitable inclination, suggesting, for example, that funds will help get individuals who stand for democracy in an oppressed society out of jail or freed from slavery.

The Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Division has noted that some scam artists try to provide credibility to their schemes by sending out contract-like letters supposedly signed by real Treasury officials. In one version of the scheme, the letters indicate that the Treasury Department requires fees to wire money into the United States, with some of the money going to noble causes like rebuilding the World Trade Center. Yet, no fees of that nature are required under federal law; there are no known instances where Treasury officials have signed such documents.

It is understandable that if an individual finds himself duped, he might be reluctant to seek legal assistance or report the crime because either the transaction has an unseemly dimension or the decision to put substantial sums of money at such risk seems to be personally embarrassing.

It is wise to report any such solicitations to the appropriate authorities.

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Treasury Department

www.secretservice.gov/alert419.shtml
www.fincen.gov

Back at Home

Community Meetings

Monday, August 8

Cedar County
10:00 am – 11:30 am
Herbert Hoover Museum
Conference Room
210 Parkside Drive
West Branch

Washington County
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Washington Library
120 East Main
Washington

Linn County
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Cedar Rapids Public
Library
Beems Auditorium
500 1st Street SE
Cedar Rapids

Tuesday, August 9

Muscatine County
10:00 am – 11:30 am
Muscatine Community
College
Large Conference Room,
Larson Hall
152 Colorado Street
Muscatine

Louisa County
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Louisa County Courthouse
117 South Main
Wapello

Johnson County
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Iowa City Public Library
Room A
123 South Linn
Iowa City

Wednesday, August 10

Wayne County
10:00 am – 11:30 am
Wayne County Courthouse
Basement Meeting Room
Corydon

Appanoose County
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Centerville City Hall
Centerville

Davis County
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Davis County Courthouse
100 Courthouse Square
Bloomfield

Thursday, August 11

Wapello County
10:00 am – 11:30 pm
Indian Hills Community
College
Bennett Student Center
Room 104
Ottumwa

Van Buren County
1:00 pm – 2:30 am
Village Cup and Cakes
202 Main Street
Keosauqua

Jefferson County
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
Fairfield Public Library
104 West Adams Avenue
Fairfield

Friday, August 12

Lee County
10:00 am – 11:30 am
West Point Public Library
317 5th Street
West Point

Des Moines County
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Southeastern Iowa Community
College, Room 406
West Burlington Campus
1500 West Agency Road
West Burlington

Henry County
5:30 pm – 7:00 pm
New London Community Hall
106 North Division Street
New London

If you cannot come to a meeting, or if you just want to share your ideas or thoughts, please send me an email by logging onto my website at www.house.gov/leach and clicking EMAIL JIM

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